

ABSTRACT

DIAGNOSTIC DELAY IN PULMONARY TUBERCULOSIS – A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

Introduction:

Early case finding, diagnosis and management are necessary for the control of tuberculosis. Among these, early case finding still remains the key to effective control. One of the components of timely diagnosis is assessing the delay and the factors contributing to it.

Study rationale:

After declaring TB to be a global epidemic in the DOTS strategy was adopted by the WHO in 1993. Over the years, various studies have shown that the case detection rates have remained consistently low. Addressing the delay in diagnosis and treatment is essential in order to improve case detection rates.

Methodology

A cross-sectional study was conducted among newly diagnosed PTB patients on intensive phase of Category I ATT in Zone VIII of Chennai Corporation. Delay was analyzed at 1) Patient level 2) Health care level 3) Total delay from onset of symptoms till treatment initiation

Results:

Almost two-thirds of the study participants sought health care providers for their symptoms. Others measures undertaken included pharmacies, self-medication, traditional medicine etc. The median duration of patient delay was 35 days (IQR 25-

50), health system delay was 4 days (IQR 3-6 days), diagnosis delay 36 days (IQR 25 – 51 days), treatment delay 3 days (IQR 3-5 days) and total delay of 39 days (IQR 29-55 days).

Discussion:

There was an unacceptable delay in the part of the patients in seeking health care. Age ≥ 35 years, smoking, seeking health care from places other than health care providers were significantly associated with longer delays.

Conclusion:

Patient delay contributes to 90% of the total delay in the diagnosis and treatment of pulmonary tuberculosis patients. Addressing the associated factors is needed for reducing delays.

Recommendations:

People who smoke may be included to be at increased suspicion for TB when they experience chest symptoms. Stringent monitoring to reduce over the counter supply of drugs may also be undertaken to facilitate early health care seeking.

Keywords: Patient delay, health system delay, chest symptomatics, Tuberculosis